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ABSTRACT

Theoretical perspectives on depression have suggested that three general orientations (self-critical, dependency, and inefficacy) characterize moods and that a depressed person's cognitive structure is different. College students (N=73) completed questionnaires to explore phenomenological correlates of normal mood states which might have continuity with clinical depression. Results revealed three distinct phenomenological patterns associated with depressive moods. In addition, biological sex had a nonsignificant effect on the three depressive experiences. The findings suggest that although women are more likely than men to become depressed, this difference may be due to factors such as difficulty in concentrating or a greater influence from psychological sex roles. (JAC)

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Phenomenological Patterns of Depressive Moods

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This study explored phenomenological correlates of normal mood states which may have continuity with clinical depression. Two theoretical perspectives on depression guided the study. One was Blatt and colleagues' (1976) point of view, which specifies three general orientations characterizing these moods. One is a self-critical orientation, which includes, for example, concern with failure to live up to one's own standards or ideals, and difficulty in accepting weaknesses in oneself. The second general orientation is characterized as dependency. People who feel dependent report such experiences as concern with dangers involved in losing someone close to oneself, and loneliness after arguments. The third general orientation involves inefficacious feelings. Examples of experiences of inefficacy include feeling that one has few inner resources, abilities, or strengths, and believing that what one does and says has little impact on others.

We conceptualized inefficacy as the more general attitude in depression, since feeling inefficacious is central to the disorder (Seligman, 1974). Self-criticism and dependency seem to reflect two ways of thinking about oneself that lead a person to experience depression or continuing sadness. A non-depressed person might feel self-critical or dependent under some circumstances but still feel efficacious enough to avoid becoming depressed.

The second theoretical perspective that guided the study was Beck's (1967, 1976) cognitive view. According to this model, we organize our experience using cognitive structures, or schemata. Some of depressed people's cognitive structures differ from those of non-depressed people; specifically, those concerning self-evaluation and interpersonal relationships (Kovacs & Beck, 1978). This perspective may seem incompatible with Blatt's work. However, our hypotheses attempt to integrate the two perspectives.

We studied two correlates of depressive experience: daydreaming styles and psychological sex roles. Research indicates that three factors characterize daydreaming styles: positive daydreaming, which involves wishful, planful, or

playful vivid imagery; guilty daydreaming involving fantasies of hostility or failure; and a distractible daydreaming style involving poor attentional control (Singer & Antrobus, 1972). By sex roles we mean psychological masculinity and femininity. Sex roles are logically independent of gender identity, or the awareness of being biologically male or female (Bem, in press). Sex roles are logically (Bem, in press) and empirically (Storms, 1980) independent of sexual preference.

We predicted that the cognitive structures associated with each depressive pattern would also reflect themselves in certain types of daydreams and sex roles. There were three specific predictions. First, the self-critical depressive mood might be a reflection of achievement-oriented premises, such as "It is much more important to do well at my work than to be close to other people." If this were the case, we would expect this mood to be associated with guilty daydreaming, both because self-criticism and guilty daydreams emphasize getting jobs done, and because the act of criticizing oneself and the feeling of guilt are similar. We would also expect self-criticism to be associated with psychological masculinity, because of the traditional association of masculinity with achievement (Carlson, 1972). Also, being forceful and dominant may involve ignoring other people's interests, or even hurting people (Bem, in press; Lewis, 1976), and self-criticism may follow this attitude.

The dependent depressive mood might reflect interpersonally-oriented premises, such as, "If I'm not loved by everyone, I can't go on living." We speculated that if one used this kind of premise one would care a great deal about other people and therefore tend to direct one's attention outward toward them, rather than inward, toward one's cognitive and imaginal processes. Therefore, we predicted that the dependent depressive mood would be associated with a distractible daydreaming style. We also expected that the dependent depressive mood would be associated with psychological femininity, since femininity traditionally involves interpersonal concerns (Bem, in press; Broverman et.al., 1972).

The inefficacious depressive pattern might reflect premises involving a generally negative view of one's life. If this were the case, we expected it to be associated with a low level of positive daydreaming. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the more negative one feels toward the world, the fewer positive thoughts and fantasies about it one is likely to have.

Method

To test these predictions, we administered three questionnaires to 40 female and 33 male undergraduates. Blatt and colleagues' (1976) Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ) yields three factor scores which measure normal depressive patterns: Self-Criticism, Dependency, and Inefficacy. The Short Form of the Imaginal Processes Inventory (IPI; Huba, Aneshensel, & Singer, in press) has three scales which assess daydreaming styles: the Guilt-Fear of Failure scale measures guilty daydreaming, the Poor Attentional Control scale measures distractibility and mindwandering, and the Positive-Constructive scale measures positive daydreaming. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) assess psychological femininity and masculinity as orthogonal attributes. We also collected demographic data. Further methodological details are available elsewhere (Golding-Mather & Singer, Note 1).

Results and Discussion

We performed regression analyses of these questionnaire data to see which variables predict depressive experience in general and which predict the two more qualitative depressive patterns. Demographic characteristics accounted for 10 to 14% of the variance in depressive experiences, and in no case did F reach the 5% significance level. When daydreaming styles and sex roles were entered into the equations, we could account for 41 to 63% of the variance in depressive patterns. In each case F was significant at the 1% level.

One way to look at predictors of depressive experience in general is to see which variables predict all three depressive patterns. Poor Attentional Control is one of the best such predictors. This result suggests that boredom and difficulty in concentrating tend to accompany the sadness which characterizes depression in

general. Indeed, some psychologists consider difficulty in concentrating to be a sign of depression (Davison & Neale, 1978, ch. 8). However, we cannot assert from the present data whether mindwandering is characteristic of psychological distress in general rather than specifically of depression.

Since we hypothesized that Inefficacy is a quantitative indicator of depressive experience, we also looked at predictors of Inefficacy as characteristics of general depressive experience. (see Table 1). Positive-Constructive daydreaming is a good additional predictor of Inefficacy. When one is depressed in the sense of feeling inefficacious, one tends not to have pleasant, vivid daydreams that are useful in problem solving or concern the future. This result parallels the finding that depressed people tend to have negative thoughts, including a negative view of the future (Beck, 1976; Blaney, 1977). Both psychological masculinity and psychological femininity were also good predictors of Inefficacy. When one is depressed one tends to describe oneself as lacking both assertiveness and interpersonal warmth. This finding supports the prediction that both psychological femininity and psychological masculinity contribute to adjustment (Bem, 1974; in press).

The data analyses also indicate that each of the two qualitative types of depressive mood involves a unique pattern of inner experience. While one may experience both qualitative types of depression in varying proportions, the two patterns are empirically distinct.

Guilt-Fear of Failure daydreaming and low psychological Femininity are, along with Poor Attentional Control, the best predictors of the Self-Critical depressive experience (see Table 2). Consistent with the hypothesis, when one experiences self-critical depression one tends to have upsetting daydreams about events in which one feels guilty or angry, and about achieving and failing. Rather than the predicted excess of assertiveness, seeing oneself as having little interpersonal sensitivity also characterizes this pattern.

Poor Attentional Control, high psychological Femininity, and low psychological Masculinity are the best predictors of the Dependent depressive experience (see Table 3). As we predicted, when one undergoes a dependent depressive experience one tends to have difficulty concentrating and to become bored frequently, and to see oneself as highly interpersonally sensitive. In addition, one experiences oneself as lacking assertiveness.

These results have at least three implications. First, since they indicate three distinct phenomenological patterns associated with depressive moods, taking these differences into account might be useful in research on the causes and treatment of depression.

The results also have implications concerning sex differences in depression. That biological sex had a consistently small and nonsignificant effect on the three depressive experiences suggests that although women are more likely than men to become depressed (Steele, 1978; Weissman & Klerman, 1977), this difference is probably due to factors other than biological sex. One such factor might be mindwandering, which in the present study was associated with depression in general. Evidence that women more often than men have difficulty concentrating (Pearlin, 1974) may therefore partly account for the observed sex difference in depression in other studies.

In addition, sex roles were among the major independent variables affecting each of the three depressive experiences. Lacking femininity predicted self-criticism, lacking masculinity predicted dependency, and lacking both femininity and masculinity predicted inefficacy. This finding suggests that psychological sex roles may be more important than biological sex in the causation of depression.

Finally, considering the limitations of any study dependent primarily on self-report on questionnaires, the present investigation points toward some useful directions for exploring inner experience. The present study suggests that reasonably reliable and statistically sound questionnaires are available and that we can obtain meaningful results from these methods in an area previously limited to anecdotal reports by individuals.

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Table 1

Predictors of Depressive Experiences Questionnaire Inefficacy

	simple r	multiple R	R^2	change in R^2	beta
SAT math score	.12	.12	.02	.02	-.10
Sex ^a	.21	.23	.05	.04	.18
Father's occupation	.02	.23	.05	.00	-.04
Maternal employment ^b	-.05	.24	.06	.00	.16
Number of siblings	.08	.25	.06	.01	.04
Birth order ^c	.19	.32	.10	.04	-.02
Ethnic background ^d	-.14	.33	.11	.01	-.07
SAT verbal score	.01	.33	.11	.00	-.03
IPI Poor Attentional Control	.26	.39	.15	.05	.02
IPI Positive-Constructive	-.28	.48	.23	.08	-.09
IPI Guilt-Fear of Failure	.02	.48	.23	.00	-.11
BSRI Masculinity	-.65	.72	.52	.29	-.65
BSRI Femininity	-.41	.79	.63	.11	-.36

^a 1=female; 2=male

^b 0=mother not employed; 1=mother employed

^c 1=only; 2=oldest; 3=middle; 4=youngest

^d 1=White; 2=Asian-American; 3=Black; 4=Hispanic; 5=other

Table 2

Predictors of Depressive Experiences Questionnaire Self-Criticism

	simple r	multiple R	R^2	change in R^2	beta
SAT math score	.28	.28	.08	.08	.37
Sex ^a	-.11	.33	.11	.03	-.32
Father's occupation	.15	.35	.12	.01	.04
Maternal employment ^b	.10	.35	.12	.00	.17
Number of siblings	-.02	.35	.12	.00	.10
Birth order ^c	.14	.37	.13	.01	.06
Ethnic background ^d	-.21	.37	.14	.00	.03
SAT verbal score	.18	.38	.14	.01	.15
IPI Poor Attentional Control	.27	.47	.22	.08	.13
IPI Positive-Constructive	.01	.47	.22	.00	-.08
IPI Guilt-Fear of Failure	.28	.61	.37	.15	.44
BSRI Masculinity	-.16	.61	.37	.00	.00
BSRI Femininity	-.28	.64	.41	.04	-.23

^a1=female; 2=male

^b0=mother not employed; 1=mother employed

^c1=only; 2=oldest; 3=middle; 4=youngest

^d1=White; 2=Asian-American; 3=Black; 4=Hispanic; 5=other

Table 3

Predictors of Depressive Experiences Questionnaire Dependency

	simple r	multiple F	R^2	change in R^2	beta
SAT math score	-.07	.07	.00	.00	-.06
Sex ^a	-.13	.13	.02	.01	-.08
Father's occupation	.15	.20	.04	.02	.16
Maternal employment ^b	.08	.22	.05	.01	.03
Number of siblings	-.17	.28	.08	.03	-.15
Birth order ^c	.03	.28	.08	.00	-.10
Ethnic background ^d	.04	.29	.08	.01	-.07
SAT verbal score	-.05	.32	.10	.02	-.13
IPI Poor Attentional Control	.39	.50	.25	.15	.29
IPI Positive-Constructive	.11	.51	.26	.01	.11
IPI Guilt-Fear of Failure	.19	.51	.27	.00	.09
BSRI Masculinity	-.37	.60	.36	.09	-.32
BSRI Femininity	.34	.67	.44	.09	.33

^a1=female; 2=male

^b0=mother not employed; 1=mother employed

^c1=only; 2=oldest; 3=middle; 4=youngest

^d1=White; 2=Asian-American; 3=Black; 4=Hispanic; 5=other